

EXHIBIT NO. 6DATE 2-17-2009BILL NO. SB 337**MONTANA - WYOMING TRIBAL FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION**

Crow / Confederated Salish and Kootenai / Fort Belknap
Fort Peck / Northern Cheyenne / Rocky Boy's / Blackfeet / Wind River

Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee
Montana Senate
P.O. Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

February 17, 2009

Dear Committee Members:

The Montana/Wyoming Fish and Wildlife Commission would hereby like to express our opposition to Senate Bill 337, "An Act Prohibiting the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks from Relocating Wild Buffalo or Bison as a Result of the State-Federal Bison Quarantine Feasibility Study."

The Montana/Wyoming Tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission consists of the Directors of Tribal Fish and Wildlife Departments from the Crow Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai, Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, Northern Cheyenne, Rocky Boy's, Blackfeet, and Wind River. The Commission was established to further conservation and management of tribal fish and wildlife resources and since its inception in 1995, has worked to preserve tribal sovereignty over natural resources and promote and advance sound management of natural resources.

We view Bill 337 as a step backward in the effort to eradicate brucellosis and in the conservation of wild bison in Montana. The bison relocation program is part of a solution to the problem - a solution hammered out by the many involved/responsible parties based on the best science and knowledge available. It has been put under tremendous scrutiny. This Bill aims to stop the progress being made and in doing so, it is unfair to Native Tribes, to the buffalo and the public and Nation as a whole. Rather than block possible solutions - it would be better for those proposing/sponsoring this Bill to work with us and others to offer solutions.

Despite the claims made in the Bill, Brucellosis is not an issue here! We must stress that these buffalo do not have brucellosis! Rather, they are clean, disease free animals. They have undergone more testing than any other group of livestock or wildlife in history. If those proposing this Bill question that - they should really question their own livestock, because these bison have been put through far more rigorous testing than any of the livestock existing or moving in and out of the state.

These buffalo are one of three conservation herds of plains bison numbering more than 1,000 animals remaining in existence and one of the few herds where cattle genes have not been detected. As such they are a valuable and irreplaceable resource that must not be lost.

In actuality, it appears that this Bill is really more about targeting bison and Native tribes than about any real threat of brucellosis. Native tribes are culturally tied to buffalo. They (buffalo) are key to our traditional uses and also in countering diabetes in our people. We are trying to help ourselves and our people - and this program offers us a great opportunity to do that while in turn conserving the buffalo

and helping America preserve a rare and vital resource. Yet, it seems that every step we take gets blocked or stymied by someone using mis-information and scare tactics to prevent our progress

Articles have even come out recently in the news claiming that no one wants this program - that neighbors don't support it. Yet in fact, several Native Tribes have requested these bison, and tribal members and many in Montana do support it. Are they no body?

We strongly urge the Committee members to look at the facts on this issue and to not be swayed by mis-information and scare tactics. These bison do not present a threat to Montana's cattle herds. Any claim that they do brings into question the entire livestock testing protocol for domestic cattle across the state. We urge you to oppose Senate Bill 337. Thank you for your consideration on this issue.

Sincerely,



Jeff Stiffarm, Vice-Chairman for
Gayle Skunk Cap, Jr., Chairman
MT/WY Tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission
Director, Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife Department
Blackfeet Nation
Box 850
Browning, Montana 59417



Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council

222 North 32nd St - Suite 401, Billings, MT 59101 Ph: (406) 252-2550, Fax (406) 254-6355
Website <http://www.mtwytlc.com> Email: belcourt@mtwytlc.com

February 12, 2009

Montana State Senate
Attn: Agricultural Committee/Rm 411
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

With this letter the Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council would like to express our opposition to Senate Bill 337, "An Act Prohibiting the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks From Relocating Wild Buffalo or Bison as a Result of the State-Federal Bison Quarantine Feasibility Study."

We view this Bill as a step back in the conservation of wild bison in Montana. Montana tribes have been involved and working cooperatively on this issue for the past twelve years with very little success until the last 3-4 years. We believe this is the time when somebody needs to step forward to resolve this issue, and the tribes are willing to do their part. This Bill will erase the positive benefits of a science based project and put us back to square one.

The Yellowstone herd is one of only 3 conservation herds of plains bison in existence numbering more than 1,000 animals - animals with pure genetics and no cattle infusion. They are one of very few genetic stocks of plains bison that originate from the original bison populations of North America. As such, they are a rare and irreplaceable resource for tribes and the Nation as a whole.

Tribal cultural interests are closely tied to the conservation and restoration of bison. Since native tribes are the primary ones applying to take bison from Yellowstone, it would appear that this Bill targets them unfairly.

The subject bison are not disease infested animals as the subject Bill would have one believe. In fact, they have undergone more rigorous testing than any other wild or domestic animals. These bison have met and exceed all standards for bison and cattle published by APHIS and after three years of quarantine and multiple testings, have been declared disease free. As such, they have exceeded the highest testing standards in the nation currently required for cattle. In addition, the animals would be subject to an additional 5 years of close monitoring and be maintained as a closed herd over that time.

If the standards applied to these bison are inadequate, standards which are supported by the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee, U.S. U.S. Animal Health

Association Brucellosis Committee, MT Department of Livestock, USDA-APHIS, and Intertribal Bison Cooperative, then it raises question about the entire National Health system which depends on UM&R standards. Effectively, this Bill establishes a double standard for wildlife versus domestic livestock.

Based on these facts, the Tribal Leaders Council strongly opposes this Bill and supports the Fort Peck Tribes, Fort Belknap Indian Community and Wind River Reservation who have submitted proposals to accept Yellowstone bison.

Sincerely,



James Steele Jr, Chairman
MT-WY Tribal Leaders Council

Cc: Tribal Chairs and Presidents
File

Fort Belknap Indian Community

SENATE AGRICULTURE

EXHIBIT NO. 11

DATE

BILL NO. SB 337



R.R. 1, Box 66
Fort Belknap Agency
Harlem, Montana 59526
PH: (406) 353-2205
FAX: Council - (406) 353-4541
FAX: Departments - (406) 353-2797

Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Tribal Govt.)
Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Elected to administer the affairs of the community and
to represent the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre
Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation)

Testimony to the Montana Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee
By Jeff Stiffarm, Director, Fort Belknap Fish and Wildlife Department
Vice-president, Montana/Wyoming Tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Jeff Stiffarm, I'm from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation where I'm the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Department/Buffalo Project. I am also the Vice-President of the Montana/Wyoming Tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission that represents tribal wildlife interests on the seven reservations in Montana as well as the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Our Commission has been involved with the Yellowstone buffalo issue for the past 12 years. Nearly all of our member tribes currently have buffalo herds on their reservations and have experience in handling buffalo.

I would like to go on record to state that the Montana/Wyoming Tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission strongly oppose Senate Bill 337.

My reservation has submitted a proposal to host disease free buffalo coming out of the Yellowstone project in 2010 or 2011. We support the efforts of the other two tribes that have also submitted proposals, the Fort Peck Tribes and the Wind River Tribes. Wind River was awarded the buffalo coming out of the program for 2009.

These buffalo are disease free animals, If those proposing this Bill question that - they need to question their own livestock; because these buffalo have been through more testing that any other livestock moving in and out of state.

Indian tribes are culturally and spiritually tied to buffalo, they are key to many of our traditional practices.

This Bill really appears to be more about targeting buffalo and Indian tribes than about any real threat of brucellosis.

Thank you for your time.